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## ABSTRACT

This document summarizes the replies received by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) member states in preparation for the International Conference on Education planned for September 1990. The report is organized in two parts. Part A summarizes the responses received on the topic of "renewed policies and strategies for the 1990s" (plenary theme), including the setting, the emerging tasks, and current trends and issues for the renewal of policies and strategies. Part B summarizes ideas on the struggle against illiteracy through universal primary education and adult education--operational aspects emphasizing the active participation of the learner. This part includes six working group topics: (1) formal and nonformal primary education and adult literacy--concerted action to achieve education for all; (2) literacy and post-literacy programs--relevance, quality, and functionality of content, instructional methods, materials, and technologies; (3) evaluation of the learners' achievement and of the larger impact of literacy and basic education; (4) initial and continuing training of literacy teachers and other personnel in literacy work; (5) functional literacy and continuing education--issues pertaining to industrialized as well as developing countries; and (6) establishment of new and more effective partnerships--management and mobilization of resources to ensure education for all. (KC)

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THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ILLITERACY : POLICIES, STRATEGIES  
 AND EMERGING OPERATIONAL ACTION FOR THE 1990s

This document is essentially based on official replies received from Member States in response to the IBE questionnaire distributed in the context of the preparation for the 42nd session of the International Conference on Education. It also draws upon relevant decisions made by the General Conferences of Unesco, the recommendations adopted by regional conferences of Ministers of Education and other literature. In addition, the World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, adopted by the World Conference on Education for All and other papers produced in connection with this conference, have been consulted.

The document sets out the facts which will provide a starting point for the discussions in the various bodies of the Conference scheduled under items 7 and 8 of the provisional agenda. It takes into account the organizational structure (Plenary and Commission which in turn will be subdivided into six working groups) as well as pertinent themes and sub-themes of the Conference, as decided by the IBE Council at its 32nd session held in March 1990 in Jomtien (Thailand) immediately after the World Conference.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Recognizing the stark reality of widespread illiteracy in many developing countries, besides the extent of functional illiteracy in both industrialized and developing countries, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (42/104) in 1987 proclaiming the year 1990 as International Literacy Year (ILY). It invited Unesco to assume the role of lead organization for International Literacy Year. In fact, the proclamation was preceded by a resolution (2.2) adopted by the General Conference of Unesco at its 23rd session in 1985 concerning International Literacy Year and the follow-up action to be taken by Unesco in co-operation with the relevant bodies of the United Nations. Another significant step in connection with this very field was also taken in the same session with the adoption of resolution 4.6 concerning the preparation of a Plan of Action to Eradicate Illiteracy by the Year 2000.
2. It was therefore fitting that the thirtieth session of the Council of the International Bureau of Education (January 1988) proposed that the forty-second session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) be held on the theme of literacy. This Conference, which occurs in 1990, thus becomes one of the major international events being organized by Unesco during International Literacy Year. It follows the World Conference on Education for All held in March 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, the first inter-agency initiative of this kind, jointly sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Unesco, UNICEF and the World Bank. Thus the Geneva Conference becomes a major international follow-up programme of the Jomtien Conference on the one hand and assumes a complementary role to it by undertaking the task of developing certain operational and pedagogical aspects of literacy learning on the other.
3. The 42nd session of the ICE will be held in Geneva from 3 to 8 September 1990 so that it coincides with International Literacy Day (8 September). The conference also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, which took place in 1965 in Teheran and which promoted the concept of functional literacy and gave an impetus to the Experimental World Literacy Programme conducted between 1967 and 1973 whose results proved useful in subsequent literacy movements throughout the world.
4. The 42nd session of the ICE also becomes a special event because of important decisions taken recently by Unesco. As a matter of fact, Unesco has attached the highest priority to literacy in its Third Medium-Term Plan (1990-1995) which was approved by the General Conference at its 25th session in November 1989. The commitment was reiterated by the same session of the General Conference in the Plan of Action to Eradicate Illiteracy by the Year 2000 emphasizing that absolute priority should be given to the struggle against illiteracy by the Organization. "This unambiguous commitment coincides with a growing awareness in all parts of the world that education is the key to the future and literacy the most essential of educational skills." (25 C/71).
5. The Plan of Action being drawn up by Unesco is aimed at helping Member States in all regions of the world to make maximum efforts to eradicate or massively reduce illiteracy by the year 2000. It therefore calls for renewing plans and strategies to promote universal literacy and to chart out a concrete programme of action aimed at the expansion of educational provision without diminishing the quality of learning and retention rates. The World Conference on Education for All has also appealed for a co-operative and collective action at the local, national, regional and international levels by governmental as well as non-governmental agencies and

committed individuals to promote basic skill acquisition by strengthening primary education and augmenting adult literacy programmes in different parts of the world. In the light of these events, the forty-second session of the International Conference on Education assumes a rather unique position in worldwide educational development and becomes a special occasion to discuss the problems of illiteracy in the context of basic education for all with the aim of taking important decisions to tackle them during the 1990s.

6. In order to prepare for the forty-second session of the International Conference on Education, a questionnaire survey was conducted by the International Bureau of Education. Replies were received from 102 Member States<sup>1</sup>; an unusually high rate of response to this questionnaire - and replies continue to reach the IBE - is in itself evidence of a very favourable atmosphere created around the problems of literacy by International Literacy Year. In order to make better use of very important information contained in the replies, the IBE intends to prepare and disseminate at the 42nd session of the ICE a reference document which will present an analysis of valuable ideas and experiences, and innovative ventures undertaken or planned by Member States.

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<sup>1</sup>. Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, German Democratic Republic, Germany (Federal Republic of), Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## PART A

## EDUCATION FOR ALL: RENEWED POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE 1990s

The setting and the emerging tasks

7. The replies from Member States present a picture of the current position in literacy and primary education in different parts of the world at the beginning of International Literacy Year, and also provide valuable bench-mark data for developing policies, strategies and programmes for the 1990s. A number of significant trends are implicit in the replies. At the same time, a variety of problems and obstacles being faced by Member States in planning and implementing national programmes of basic education for all have been highlighted. The questions of quality and coverage have been raised and special areas of action demanding higher priorities have also been indicated. All these call for careful consideration and discussion during the Conference.
8. Moreover, by the time the forty-second session of the ICE takes place more than half of International Literacy Year will have passed. The Year began with official launching ceremonies organized at the national, regional and global levels by governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental agencies; and so far many meetings, conferences, symposia and exhibitions have been held on different facets of literacy, post-literacy and basic education; a large number of leaflets and brochures, posters and calendars, pins and stickers have come out in many parts of the world and in different languages; and the media have projected the ILY through TV, radio and other means of communication to generate public awareness and commitment. Most countries reported in their replies the setting up of national committees for International Literacy Year to co-ordinate these activities. Therefore, one of the purposes of the ICE session is to make a quick and qualitative review of the action taken by Member States and other concerned agencies up to the first half of ILY, and take decisions to design further action during the remainder of the Year and for the whole Decade. Furthermore, the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in March 1990 has attempted to generate political will and mobilize financial resources to promote education for all. Therefore, yet another important purpose of the ICE, as one of the major follow-up events, is to provide a forum for the Member States to present in its session the measures foreseen by their governments to pursue the outcomes of the World Conference.
9. In the light of the above, some of the key issues that the plenary session and the Commission may examine are:
  - what has been achieved so far,
  - what are the current trends and problems,
  - what are the initial results achieved, and what are the difficulties and problems encountered, in the implementation of the World Conference's outcomes,
  - what policies and strategies should be adopted for the 1990s,
  - how to accelerate action by renewing political and national commitment, strengthening co-operation at all levels, and mobilizing resources,
  - what are the essential needs identified by the responsible authorities in Member States in connection with the objectives of the World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs adopted by the World Conference.

Current trends and issues for the renewal of policies and strategies(a) The present situation

10. An overall analysis of the questionnaire responses reveals that, while some progress has indeed been made in regard to adult literacy as well as primary education for children, much remains to be done to achieve the cherished goal of a literate world and the realization of education as a fundamental right for all. From the statistical data supplied in reply to the questionnaire by Member States, as well as those available in Unesco sources, the following global picture emerges:
- (i) The number of literate adults above the age of 15 is rising. For example, it increased from 1,421.4 million in 1970 to 2,276.8 million in 1985. In percentage terms, the rate of illiteracy, estimated at 38.5% in 1970, was reduced to 29.4% in 1985. While this is a significant gain, especially in the context of a tremendous increase in the world population during the same period, it does not yet lead the world close enough to the realization of the target of eradicating of illiteracy: over one quarter of the world's adult population above the age of 15 cannot read or write.
  - (ii) The number of adult illiterates in the world has increased from 890 million in 1970 to 949.5 million in 1985. The Unesco estimates for 1990 show a slight decrease to 948.1 million. However, this is due to the decrease in the number of illiterates in developed countries. In developing countries, the number of illiterates is still rising. For these countries, the count-down has not yet begun.
  - (iii) The disparity in literacy rates between women and men, rather than declining, is gradually growing. In 1970, the female share of global illiteracy was 61.0%, in 1985 it was 62.8%, and according to estimates for 1990 it is moving close to 63.5%. In some countries illiteracy among women is double that of men. Similarly, both in percentage terms and in absolute numbers of illiterates, there are sharp disparities among regions, among nations within regions, and among urban, rural and remote areas within nations.
  - (iv) In most of the forty-two least-developed countries a majority of the adult population is illiterate, as poverty and illiteracy are inter-locked in a vicious circle. In some of these countries, illiteracy among women is more than 80%.
  - (v) In the absence of adequate post-literacy programmes, the neo-literate adults as well as children who drop out of school prematurely are at risk of lapsing back into illiteracy. This phenomenon of relapse, if not taken care of in time, can act against attaining the goal of universal literacy.
  - (vi) There has been a remarkable increase in the enrolment of children in primary schools in the last three decades. For example, between 1960 and 1990 the school enrolment rate of children in the age-group 6 to 11 went up in developing countries from 48.1% to 77.8%. However, more than 120 million children still do not have access to primary schooling.
  - (vii) The dropout rates at the primary stage in developing countries are high, attendance and completion rates are low, and the quality of achievement leaves much to be desired. Almost one-fifth of those enrolled drop out before completing the first grade itself. This and other such factors eventually swell the ranks of adult illiterates.
  - (viii) The industrialized countries have reached the target of universal primary education and have virtually eliminated absolute (or basic) illiteracy among their population. But a significant percentage of adults with inadequate literacy and numeracy skills are found in almost all of these countries. Precise statistics are not yet available, and the available estimates vary according to the definition of literacy employed, but the

broad estimates quoted in different sources range from some 5 to 10 per cent. Illiteracy is thus a worldwide problem concerning practically all nations, rich or poor, although its nature and magnitude varies from country to country.

- (ix) During the 1980s many developing countries have experienced an acute financial crisis as a result of debt burdens, rising debt servicing ratios, unfavourable commercial relations and several other factors. As a consequence, the government expenditures for primary education and adult literacy have slowed down, and even fallen, resulting in some cases in a standstill and even a decline in enrolments at the basic stage.

- 11. This is only a partial and broad-based scenario, but it does indicate certain significant trends, major problems and obstacles, and specific areas of concentration that should be kept in view in developing programmes for a decade of determined action. Using these global trends as starting points, individual Member States may have to examine and analyse their own particular situation in order to renew the policies and strategies for the Decade.

(b) Definitions and objectives

- 12. The definitions of key terms and concepts, such as literacy, functional literacy and basic education, or literate, illiterate, and functionally illiterate, call for discussion and periodic review from the conceptual, ideological and operational points of view. New terms, such as cultural literacy, computer literacy, technological literacy, economic literacy and active literacy, entering gradually into educational parlance, should also be critically examined by individual nations in terms of their implications, applicability and relevance.
- 13. Most Member States have indicated in their questionnaire reply that the following definitions, worked out by Unesco for statistical purposes, are applicable to their countries:

Illiterate: a person "who cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life."

Functionally illiterate : a person "who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for his own and the community's development."

- 14. It may be noted that for pedagogical operations such as curriculum construction, teaching/learning procedures and periodical evaluation of learner achievement, the dichotomous classification like literate vs illiterate such as the one mentioned above which is chiefly meant for collecting broad statistics, is not sufficient. In actual practice, different levels of literacy exist, and these levels are operationally defined or differentiated in terms of particular competencies and content of learning within the context of the local and national situations.
- 15. Those who are functionally illiterate do not necessarily suffer from absolute illiteracy. Of course, there are persons who, despite compulsory primary education, partially lose the reading and writing skills they acquired at school (secondary illiterates, as described in the Federal Republic of Germany). By and large, their problem is to cope with the reading, writing and computational demands of highly industrialized and technologically advanced societies. In Australia, for example, according to the best data presently available, 10 per cent of the population over 15

years old is unable to perform even functional everyday reading and writing tasks. One person in ten cannot read a telephone book, fill in a medical claim form or write a job application. In Australia the skills required to carry out such tasks are described by coining a new term - "active literacy". Similarly, in Canada, for the federal government agency that conducts census and labour force surveys, literacy skills are defined as: "The information processing skills necessary to use the printed material commonly encountered at work, at home and in the community". While percentages of the functionally illiterate may vary according to the type of tasks included in a particular working definition of functional literacy, the studies carried out in Canada, USA and several European countries have clearly shown that the nature of tasks in question is indicative of the impact of industrialization on society. The need for acquiring and enhancing literacy as a lifelong process has now been recognized for all members of the societies.

16. At the other end of the spectrum is a working definition of literacy used to collect census data in many developing countries. The only competency asked for, and seldom tested or checked in any manner, is often the ability to sign one's name. Literacy data collected on the basis of such a diluted definition do not have adequate reliability. By contrast, some countries such as Ethiopia, Indonesia, Jamaica and the United Republic of Tanzania, among others, have defined expected levels of literacy learning in specific terms and have instituted national or provincial literacy testing mechanisms as part of the literacy movement itself, as a result of which the percentages and other data concerning literate populations attain much higher validity and reliability.
17. The specific criteria constituting the definition and scope of literacy will continue to vary from country to country to a certain extent because of the fact that the actual operational definition of literacy or functional literacy is situation-specific. In the light of this, what is needed for individual countries is to adopt clear definitions and parameters of key terms such as literacy or basic education in order to formulate curricula and action plans aimed at education for all, and review these definitions periodically. The following specifications of the means and scope of basic education included in the World Declaration on Education for All, as adopted by the World Conference on Education for All, are worth considering in this respect:

"The diversity, complexity, and changing nature of basic learning needs of children, youth and adults necessitate broadening and constantly redefining the scope of basic education to include the following components:

  - Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programmes, as appropriate.
  - The main delivery system for the basic education of children outside the family is primary schooling. Primary education must be universal, ensure that the basic learning needs of all children are satisfied, and take into account the culture, needs and opportunities of the community. Supplementary alternative programmes can help meet the basic learning needs of children with limited or no access to formal schooling provided that they share the same standards of learning applied to schools, and are adequately supported.
  - The basic learning needs of youth and adults are diverse and should be met through a variety of delivery systems. Literacy programmes are indispensable because literacy is a necessary skill in itself and the foundation of other life skills. Literacy in the mother-tongue strengthens cultural identity and heritage. Other needs can be served by: skills training, apprenticeships, and formal and non-formal education programmes such as health, nutrition, population, safe water, agricultural

techniques, the environment, science, technology, family life, including fertility awareness, and other societal issues.

- All available instruments and channels of information, communications, and social action could be used to help convey essential knowledge and inform and educate people on social issues. In addition to the traditional means, libraries, TV, radio and other media can be mobilized to realize their potential towards meeting the basic education needs of all.

These components should constitute an integrated system - complementary, mutually reinforcing and of comparable standards - and they should contribute to creating and developing possibilities for lifelong learning."

18. It is important to state at this stage that a significant development has taken place particularly during the past two decades regarding the scope and meaning attached to the term literacy - a trend which is bound to influence the objectives, plans and programmes for the 1990s. The literacy debate of the recent past has no doubt accepted the skills of reading, writing and computation as important objectives, constituting the core of any literacy programme, but has classified these skills as instrumental. The movement of "popular education" in Latin America, intensive work by Unesco on the multiple dimensions of literacy and post-literacy in the framework of lifelong education, the world-wide activities of non-governmental organizations like the International Council for Adult Education and several other such initiatives, have raised the question of the context in which literacy learning takes place, and have argued that the effects of literacy are not absolute but are relative since they are conditioned by prevailing realities. They have also raised the question of content, emphasizing that reading skill, for example, is not just a matter of coding and decoding, but decoding as to what is the underlying message, and for what socio-economic and political end? Here is a single sentence summary of this trend: "Literacy, properly understood, is not only a skill for reading the word, but for understanding the world and playing one's part in transforming it into a more just, equitable and congenial place to live."<sup>2</sup>
19. Thus, the scope of literacy is no longer confined to the realm of education alone but is closely linked to the larger socio-economic and political issues such as empowerment movements, gender justice, liberation efforts, preservation of cultural roots, and, of course, economic emancipation. The purposes of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education are deeper, more radical and more fundamental, touching the very core and quality of people's personal, social and vocational lives rather than just to "Alphabetize" them or make them master the skills of coding and decoding words and sentences. Literacy is no longer viewed as an isolated act but is an integral part of larger human processes of perception, reflection, awareness and action. From the Freirian point of view, the literacy process must relate speaking the word to transforming reality and to man's role in that transformation.

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<sup>2</sup>. Federico Mayor, "International Literacy Year: opportunity and challenge". Unesco, Paris, 1990. (IBE, Literacy Lessons Series)

(c) The magnitude of the task

20. The task of providing literacy and basic education at large is very complex and multi-faceted. Apart from coming to grips with definitions, basic terms and objectives of literacy and education for all, it is necessary to consider a number of other factors such as: coverage of different categories of learners and the problems being faced by them, learner motivation, special issues concerning the basic education of women and girls, structural and organizational arrangements to provide facilities for learning, improvement in the quality of learning, mobilization of financial and other resources, and enlisting co-operation and support from a variety of agencies and institutions operating at the local, national, regional and international levels.
21. As regards quantitative coverage in relation to literacy, Unesco estimates, as quoted earlier for 1990, indicate that provision will have to be made in the coming years to provide literacy to some 948.1 million youth and adults. Of these, 916.6 million potential learners are in developing countries and 31.5 million in developed countries, not including those categorized as functionally illiterate. All these figures will have to be supplemented by additional numbers of illiterates who will cross the age of 15 during the 1990s. The regional and sub-regional breakdowns estimated by Unesco regarding developing countries for 1990 also point to the magnitude of the task faced by different geographical areas. In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the illiteracy rates are among the highest: 53.9% and 52.7%. In absolute numbers they are estimated at 398.1 million and 138.8 million respectively. In the Arab Region, the adult illiteracy rate is 48.7% or 61.1 million. In East Asia, it is relatively lower: 23.8%, but in absolute numbers it is as high as 278.8 million, whereas in Latin America and the Caribbean, the estimate is the lowest: 15.3% and in absolute numbers 43.9 million. It may be added that there are many practical difficulties in collecting and combining literacy statistics for different regions, as well as globally, which should be kept in view when interpreting them. Nonetheless, they do indicate general trends and point to the relative magnitude of efforts required to combat the problems of literacy in different regions and sub-regions.
22. In the ultimate analysis, it is clear that the magnitude of the task varies from country to country. For example, some countries have a massive problem of illiteracy in terms of percentage as well as in absolute numbers; whereas some others have to face the problem of residual illiteracy (say, about 10% or less) recognizing the fact that it becomes extremely difficult to handle the residual problem effectively on account of social, psychological and similar obstacles. It is thus essential that every country collects precise data according to the definition of literacy adopted by it, and analyzes them in terms of learner characteristics and other criteria for identifying the magnitude of the task and planning corresponding measures to eliminate illiteracy.
23. In the context of the goal of education for all, it is essential to take into account demographic trends, over and above present illiteracy figures for adults, since in most developing countries the population is increasing rather rapidly. The projections of increase in future enrolment in primary schools become essential in this context. In addition, primary school dropouts, repeaters, and those children who are not enrolled at all for various reasons have to be taken into consideration in making a reasonable estimate of the total magnitude of the task in terms of numbers. The drop-out rates are quite high in many developing countries; in some countries they are as high as 40 to 50%. While it is true that the large incidence of dropout - which amounts to economic and other forms of wastage - should eventually be eliminated, it does take time to do so. Therefore, this critical factor should be taken care of in planning and programming basic education for all.

24. Thus, in quantitative terms this analysis implies a careful and concerted action to (a) clear the backlog of adult illiteracy, (b) provide literacy to those illiterate children who cross the cut-off age of 15 and join the ranks of adult illiterates during the course of the 1990s, (c) strengthen primary education to stem the problem of illiteracy at its root, and (d) develop post-literacy and continuing education programmes leading to basic education for all.
- (d) A two-track strategy
25. The question as to what should be the global operational strategy to take care of the huge task of eradicating illiteracy has engaged the attention of political leaders, educational planners and practitioners. Of course, a firm political will and strong national commitment are the first pre-requisites. At the political level, high priority should be accorded to education for all in order to realize education as a fundamental right and to prepare the ground to realize other fundamental rights through the acquisition of a basic level of education by all children and adults. Adequate financial resources should be allocated to this basic task. Members of society should be made fully aware of the significance and urgency of the task and their active participation and support should be mobilized to achieve the aim of education for all in the shortest possible time frame. But when these conditions are ensured, how to translate the political and social will into organizational and operational action has also to be carefully thought out.
26. This question has been examined by the General Conference of Unesco, other international and regional bodies and the documents prepared by them, including Unesco's Third Medium-Term Plan (1990-1995), and the documents pertaining to the International Literacy Year and the Plan of Action to Eradicate Illiteracy by the Year 2000. They all have indicated that elimination of illiteracy calls for concurrent and co-ordinated measures embracing children and adults. There should be a programme of universalization of primary education on the one hand and that of adult literacy on the other. This is variously called a two-fold approach or a dual approach or a two-track approach. What is more crucial in such an approach is that educational action for both categories of learners should become integral parts of a single policy and a single operational strategy. There was a time when the problem of adult literacy was treated in isolation as a separate social activity. There was also a time when primary education alone was treated as a sole vehicle to achieve universal literacy in a society. But such an action takes a very long time and large numbers of illiterate youth and adults are left behind in the contemporary period of rapid socio-economic and technological progress requiring adequate skills of literacy and numeracy, among others. It has also been the experience that when adults become literate, they indirectly facilitate schools by enrolling their children and retaining them in the school for the required duration. For this and many other reasons, the two-track strategy is advocated. In fact, the pertinent projects launched between 1979 and 1989 by the Unesco Regional Offices in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Arab States in co-operation with Member States have followed the integrated two-track strategy to promote the universalization and renewal of primary education for school-age children as well as programmes of literacy, post-literacy and basic education for youth and adults.
27. When an inter-locked two track strategy is followed, the two corresponding organizational structures utilized to make educational provision are: (i) a formal school system with its classical structure, and (ii) non-formal or non-conventional learning arrangements for adults. However, recent experience of the actual application of the two-track strategy in several countries, such as

Bangladesh, Colombia, Congo, Egypt, Pakistan, Panama and the Philippines, has shown that a third type of learning arrangement becomes essential for out-of-school children. This is a non-formal structure for literacy and the primary level of learning at the pre-adult stage.

28. As stated earlier, over 120 million children of school-age are not in a position to take advantage of the formal school system. Some of them have dropped out prematurely and may not possess sustainable basic skills. Some others have no easy access to formal school on account of distance, etc. Still others may have school facilities available nearby but are unable to take advantage of them because they are "working children". On account of extreme poverty, a number of families in developing countries are obliged to engage children in productive work in the family such as collecting fuel, tending cattle and taking care of younger siblings - thus enabling parents to work outside the home. In other cases, a number of school-age children are obliged to go out for gainful employment on a full-time basis even though child labour is normally prohibited. How do we reach these groups of children and enable them to acquire basic skills within the peculiar life conditions and socio-economic circumstances in which they are placed? This, indeed, is a challenging and daunting task and calls for an innovative response so as to create supplementary and non-formal learning systems with the necessary flexibility and local variations to cater for the educational needs of out-of-school children. There may be dropouts and "push-outs" from a school system, but there are no "push-outs" or rejects in a learning system created in the framework of education for all. Thus, suitable structural arrangements including (a) a formal school system for children, (b) a variety of non-formal and unconventional structures for out-of-school children, and (c) non-formal structures for adult literacy and basic education have to be created. Such an arrangement made within the two-track strategy would ensure structural provision for all potential learners of literacy and basic education irrespective of their age in the perspective of lifelong education. This aspect is to be examined further by Working Group I, and therefore some more information in this regard is presented in Part B of this document.

(e) Motivational issues

29. As regards enrolments and coverage, it is encouraging to note from the questionnaire replies that large numbers of illiterate youth and adults participate in literacy programmes in a number of countries such as China, Colombia, Egypt, India, Kenya, Kuwait, Mexico and many others. The evolution of non-formal and innovative structures that take account of learners' convenience about time and place of learning have contributed to increased enrolments. However, the number of those who successfully complete the course in several countries is rather low, in some cases 50 per cent or less of those initially enrolled.
30. There are many obstacles to be overcome in attracting adults to literacy and post-literacy programmes. Learners who, by and large, belong to poorer and disadvantaged sections of society do not have much extra time for study unless they themselves perceive the need and significance of literacy learning. They seldom see any connection between literacy and their daily struggle for survival. Sometimes the programme content also does not respond adequately to their needs, priorities, pre-occupations, interests and opportunities. Some learning centres do not have sufficient teaching materials or even appropriate lighting and seating facilities. Consequently, learners are not motivated to join the learning centre and if they do join they soon lose motivation and dropout.

31. In fact, learner motivation is a key to the success of any literacy programme. It is necessary to develop strategies that take account of adult learners' needs, priorities and experience that they bring to the learning centre. They cannot be treated as children or as ignorant or inferior in any way. Furthermore, learning should become an experience of joy and self-fulfilment. A variety of motivational measures being implemented in co-operation with media, local communities and employing agencies, as witnessed in countries like Algeria, Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Jamaica, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco and Venezuela, to name only a few, are worth sharing and emulating. Also, a variety of incentives and reward systems, designed and implemented by Benin, Indonesia, Mali, Nicaragua, Niger, Senegal and other nations, have been found to be effective in removing certain obstacles.
32. The ultimate success of any literacy drive will depend not only on creating enrolment capacity but also on the holding power of the programme where motivation plays a crucial role. Experiences from many developing countries have shown that along with an instructional programme for literacy learning, there should be a sound motivational programme which should permeate all stages of pre-literacy, literacy and post-literacy phases in a literacy continuum. Motivation, which is essentially a psychological trait, is conditioned by a variety of motivators - personal, social, economic, political and religious. They have to be taken into account in developing a motivational programme in the context of the national and local milieu. Study of the contextual factors, genuine participation of learners in different aspects of a literacy programme, and focusing the programme on the needs, priorities, problems and interest of the learner are important factors in the process of generating motivation in literacy participants. For example, some adults are motivated to join literacy classes in order to acquire social status, prestige and sometimes a certificate. In some other situations, especially when most people in a given society are already literate (cases of residual illiteracy), the potential learner often suffers from guilt and shame, does not like the term literacy, and prefers other, more acceptable terms such as basic education. Some learners perceive the significance of literacy for self-improvement and self-reliance in matters of reading and writing one's own personal correspondence, managing the sale and purchase of their own goods, etc. In some cultures, acquisition of capacity in reading religious scriptures generates motivation for literacy. It is common experience that the recognized economic significance of literacy almost invariably results in producing high motivation. When a literacy programme has a concrete anti-poverty and income-generating component it has a powerful effect on literacy participants - for understandable reasons. The potential economic advantage, immediate or long range, plays an important role in attracting learners to literacy and post-literacy programmes. In some situations and settings, the political significance of literacy is accepted and internalized by potential learners. Some participants are interested in issues of family welfare, including better education and future socio-economic mobility for their children. These are examples of a variety of sources of motivation which could be profitably tapped for strengthening the programmes of literacy and continuing education.
33. The need for generating motivation is not for learners alone. It is equally necessary to motivate teachers and other personnel involved in planning, implementation and management of programmes. Among various ways of creating enthusiasm and sustaining motivation in them is to give appropriate social recognition for the valuable work that they do in this difficult field. The annual celebrations of International Literacy Day and other such occasions may include programmes of giving prizes and awards to those who display high degrees of commitment, excellence and innovativeness in performing their tasks.

(f) Women's and girls' literacy: a special priority

34. The vital significance of women's literacy, in particular for family welfare, is well known. Questionnaire replies and other sources show that some progress has been made in respect of women's literacy as well as the enrolment of girls in primary schools. However, as stated earlier, about two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women. In some countries, or in particular pockets within a given country, the illiteracy rate among women is as high as 90 per cent or even more. Women and girls do not always enjoy parity with men and boys as regards participation in literacy programmes and primary education. On account of a lack of sufficient opportunity, women have more difficulty in retaining literacy once acquired. Again they have greater difficulty in participating in post-literacy programmes because of other compelling responsibilities. Many more such educational indicators depicting the existing unfavourable position for women and girls can be cited.
35. What is even more crucial at this juncture is to go deep into the analysis of genuine causes of such a plight. In many societies, women and girls are consigned to a lower position in the family, resulting in a kind of intra-family inequality which is eventually reflected in educational decisions concerning them. In certain cultures, there is a conflict between tradition and modernity stemming from the traditional gender subordination or even suppression. The oppressive social relations, in turn, result in an overall injustice and inequality as well as an unfavourable attitude towards the education of girls and women. Furthermore, in many societies, women and girls are over-burdened with laborious and time-consuming drudgery in the home and family, as well as on the farm and factory floor. Consequently, they have neither time nor energy to attend literacy centres. On account of the secondary status accorded to women in the family and community, as well as through discriminatory legal measures in some cultures and countries, women have virtually become voiceless and marginalized. Thus, the problem is much broader than just educational and is deeply rooted in the age-old culture, tradition and life-styles of particular societies. These and other such factors must be taken into account in evolving workable strategies as well as relevant curricula, teaching/learning procedures, evaluation approaches, and the training of teachers and animators. A special action programme, based on the study and analysis of socio-cultural, religious and economic factors operating in different countries and communities, is called for in the 1990s as part of a constructive and comprehensive movement which should include the struggle for literacy and basic education for women and girls on the one hand, and a concurrent struggle by appropriate agencies for gender justice, status equality and economic emancipation on the other. The problem is thus not only how to mobilize women for literacy learning, but also how to seek the co-operation of men by way of changing their attitude and action pertaining to the education of girls and women.

(g) Regional and international co-operation

36. Yet another significant input needed in strengthening the literacy drive is international co-operation and world solidarity. It is encouraging to note from several sources, including the questionnaire replies both from industrialized and developing countries, that bilateral as well as multilateral co-operation in this field has developed. At the same time feelings have been voiced for greater international support by way of instructional materials, training of personnel, exchange of innovative experiences and funds.
37. Unesco's support to developing countries in stimulating literacy and post-literacy activities, and to functional literacy programmes, has proved useful to individual Member States and, simultaneously, these activities have resulted in promoting

North-South dialogue, South-South co-operation (TCDC) and linkages with non-governmental organizations. In this respect, the activities of Unesco's Regional Offices, especially the Major Project in the Field of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Programme of the Eradication of Illiteracy in Africa, the Asian and Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL), and the Regional Programme for the Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States have been found to be very useful and effective. The Asian and the Pacific Regional Literacy Programme conducted by the Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco (ACCU) in co-operation with Unesco's Regional Office and Member States have also been very helpful in many ways. The international programmes of post-literacy and continuing education, evaluation and monitoring in relation to literacy and post-literacy learning, impact evaluation and research activities as well as information-exchange networks concerning the problems of functional literacy in industrialized countries organized by the Unesco Institute for Education, Hamburg, have also been very valuable to Member States in several ways. Similar activities by IBE and IIEP have likewise resulted in strengthening international co-operation and the exchange of experience and information. The Regional Conferences of Education Ministers and those Responsible for Economic Planning, as well as International Conferences on Adult Education organized by Unesco, have also contributed to international solidarity in this area. The absolute priority accorded by Unesco to literacy in the Third Medium-Term Plan should enable the Organization to extend further support resulting in intensifying regional and international co-operation.

38. The non-governmental organizations operating at international and regional levels in the field of literacy and adult education have also been making a remarkable contribution towards enhancing international solidarity and promoting collective action in co-operation with governmental or other non-governmental bodies, working either on the problems of literacy itself or on the problems in allied areas such as health, nutrition, child care, family welfare and vocational training to generate more income. The International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL), set up by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) immediately after the proclamation of ILY, is a coalition of NGOs, which in turn, have a very large number of national branches and grassroot level members throughout the world. Unesco's Standing Committee on NGOs has joined hands with ITFL in its activities. Also, the activities of ITFL complement those of Unesco's annual Collective Consultations. A variety of regional and international activities including: (i) international "media launch" organized in close co-operation with Unesco to mobilize the media, (ii) people's launch of ILY organized in January 1990, (iii) an international "book voyage", (iv) periodical meetings of NGOs, donor agencies and other co-operating bodies for the purposes of stock-taking and further planning of various activities, and (v) a special international newsletter, have been playing a critical and catalytic role in forging international solidarity and promoting action for the cause of literacy.
39. Several donor agencies from industrialized countries have supported literacy programmes and campaigns in selected developing countries in the past years, as specified in questionnaire replies. Bilateral and multilateral co-operation, thus established in a spirit of genuine partnership between rich and poor countries, is indeed a very welcome trend. This development will have to be greatly strengthened and a new North-South alliance will have to be established for the 1990s. The inter-agency action evident in the organization of the World Conference on Education for All has been a very timely step in this context.
40. The World Conference stressed that priority in promoting basic education has to be at national level, which implies maximum mobilization and effective use of the internal human and material resources in each country. However, it is amply evident

that without massive financial support from the industrialized countries, bilateral donor agencies and international aid agencies, the goals set for achieving universal literacy and primary education during the 1990s would not be attained by most developing countries, and a great opportunity to promote the welfare and progress of the whole of humanity would be lost. This is true not only for the least developed countries but also for most other developing countries because of the fact that, for many reasons, the last decade has been economically unfavourable for them and, in consequence, the rapid educational progress made by them during the 1960s and 1970s has already slowed down during the 1980s. The questionnaire responses, the reports of regional consultations carried out in connection with the World Conference on Education for All, meetings of the International Task Force on Literacy and several other sources clearly point to a dilemma that, while global awareness about the significance and urgency of achieving these goals has substantially increased and the political will appears to have become stronger than ever before in most developing countries, these nations are simply unable to make sufficient progress on account of utterly inadequate financial means. On the other hand, International Literacy Year has triggered a fresh hope of mounting a renewed global movement in favour of literacy during the 1990s. On account of this development, momentum has been created for all countries to act with a renewed vigour and commitment. In order not to miss this opportunity, a new alliance between the developed and developing countries must be established.

41. It should be added that the prospects of forging such a new alliance and solidarity on a worldwide basis have been greatly enhanced as a result of a dramatic change in the international political climate that came about during the last years of the 1980s. This change has created new hopes for the 1990s to achieve peace and prosperity for practically the whole of humanity. For any serious attempt to achieve them and, more importantly, to sustain them, one of the most essential preconditions is to create a fully literate global society and an increasingly more enlightened world. This is a new challenge and a new possibility for the developed and the developing nations alike, and it should be given due consideration not only in forging a new international alliance but also in preparing and executing renewed policies, strategies and programmes of basic education. If, with this totally new and favourable development, and taking into consideration other pertinent factors and forces such as those traced earlier, collective, co-operative and concerted action is taken during the 1990s, the beginning of the twenty-first century and the dawn of a new millennium can be significantly different.
42. The Conference may wish to discuss among others, the following questions:
  1. What measures can be taken during the 1990s at national, regional and international levels in the context of renewed policies and strategies in the light of the Unesco Plan of Action to Eradicate Illiteracy by the year 2000 and the World Declaration on Education for All and Framework Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, adopted by the World Conference, in order to accelerate the movement towards a fully literate world?
  2. What is the meaning and scope of literacy? of basic education? How can the core objectives of the 3Rs be integrated with more profound goals such as empowerment, economic emancipation and social transformation?
  3. A number of countries have carried out literacy campaigns achieving varied degrees of success. What lessons could be drawn from these experiences and utilized profitably to fulfil the new commitment concerning basic education for all?

4. In order to generate motivation among learners, teachers and other personnel involved in the struggle against illiteracy, what specific measures should be adopted in the renewed policies and strategies for the 1990s?
5. It is often observed that, while the significance and urgency of basic skill acquisition by women and girls is accepted and talked about as a high priority area, not enough is done in actual practice. What actions, in concrete terms, should be taken by the national, regional and international authorities during the 1990s so that words are genuinely translated into deeds?
6. In what specific ways can bilateral and multilateral co-operation be strengthened in order to meet the new resource needs for achieving the goal of education for all?
7. How can public authorities assist and co-operate with non-governmental organizations operating at the local, national and international levels in the movement of eradicating illiteracy and promoting basic education for all?

## PART B

### THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ILLITERACY THROUGH UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION: OPERATIONAL ASPECTS EMPHASIZING THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE LEARNER

43. Part A of this document has dealt with certain major issues that require careful consideration in reviewing existing policies and strategies for literacy and basic education and renewing them for further action during the 1990s. Part B is devoted to a more intensive discussion on the structural organization of literacy movements, management and mobilization of resources, and improvement of quality in literacy programmes by focusing attention on various operational and pedagogical aspects including programme content, teaching-learning processes, evaluation and teacher training. This part is thus meant to initiate debate on the special theme for the Commission, as well as on its six sub-themes which are to be discussed more intensively in the working groups. Obviously, the topics included in Parts A and B are inter-related in many ways. This fact has to be taken into account for the plenary discussions, as well as for the deliberations in the Commission through its working groups.
1. Formal and non-formal primary education and adult literacy: concerted action to achieve education for all
44. What kind of structural organization should be made to provide learning arrangements to all categories of potential learners in a programme of education for all? In the section on a two-track strategy in Part A of this document, it has been pointed out that, for the universalization of primary education and adult literacy, three major types of structural arrangements are necessary:
- (a) A formal system of education of the conventional type, with the necessary modifications and renewal, for school-age children who are in a position to attend full-time school for a sufficient duration;
  - (b) Non-formal, flexible and innovative learning arrangements for out-of-school children who are not in a position to take advantage of the formal system for various reasons;
  - (c) Non-formal structures for adult literacy.
45. As regards the formal system of primary education, the questionnaire replies have indicated that while access to primary education for all is absolutely necessary, it is by no means a sufficient condition to achieve universal literacy in many developing countries. This is different from the situation in industrialized countries where formal primary education has, by and large, fulfilled the requirement of universal literacy. As questionnaire replies have pointed out, in many developing countries there are formidable problems of dropout as well as repetition. As long as a high incidence of wastage and stagnation persists, enrolment figures remain an inadequate and even a misleading indicator of success for primary education programmes. What is needed is to improve retention and completion rates along with maintaining high enrolment ratios. Furthermore, improvement in the regularity of attendance, among other things, is essential to achieve an acceptable quality of learning outcomes. In sum, the renewed policies and strategies for primary education should follow the guiding principles of: (a) moving from enrolment to achievement; (b) optimizing the rates of retention and completion; (c) monitoring and controlling regularity in attendance; and (d) improving the quality of curriculum, instruction, evaluation and teacher effectiveness.

46. While it is important to eliminate dropout from formal primary schools, it will take some time to do so. In the meantime it will be necessary to make supplementary and alternative educational provision outside the school system so that those children who drop-out prematurely do not lapse back into illiteracy. But school dropouts make up only one group of out-of-school children. As stated in the section on a two-track strategy in Part A of this document, there are other such groups, including those who have no access to formal primary school due to the inadequate infrastructure needed for primary education and those "working children" who are not in a position to take advantage of the full-time and formal primary schools. All these groups of out-of-school children, the majority of whom are girls in many different situations, need non-formal and non-traditional structural arrangements for learning before they swell the ranks of illiterate adults and make the task of adult literacy ever more difficult.
47. In response to the challenge of providing education to out-of-school children and youth, a variety of alternative, supplementary and non-formal learning arrangements have recently evolved in different countries which not only increase the overall coverage of the primary stage of education but are likely to be less expensive compared to the cost of the formal system. For example, in Brazil, local learning centres have been established to provide first-level schooling to those children who have had no access to schools. The "Paraschool Education" department of the Ministry of Education in Burundi runs polyvalent education centres as a complement to the formal primary system. Also in Burundi, the Catholic Yagamukama centres offer a widespread and effective non-formal system to meet the needs of school dropouts and other primary-level learners. Although the primary school enrolment rate has reached 95% in China, there remain large numbers of unschooled children in mountainous areas, border areas, pasture lands and national minority areas. To serve their needs, over 200,000 non-formal "teaching stations" function all over the country. The teaching stations offer classes at varied times of the day in locations convenient to learners: some are mobile and others have boarding facilities. The same curriculum is followed as that for formal schools, but it is covered in four-fifths of the time required for formal education. In Colombia, several educational programmes for marginalized children exist, including those for street children. In Egypt, special "one-class schools" have been established in areas where there are no regular formal schools. The Central Ministry of Human Resource Development in India has established a fully-fledged non-formal programme as part of its effort to universalize primary education. This programme is conducted in close co-operation with state (provincial) governments and voluntary agencies by creating several hundred thousand centres throughout the country. The non-formal learning centres for children of fishing communities in Indonesia, the mobile tent school in the Philippines, and non-formal learning centres for the 10% unenrolled children (besides school dropouts) in Sri Lanka are a few more examples. In Indonesia, a fully-fledged national directorate of non-formal education has been established which provides basic education to out-of-school children, as well as for adults. A similar directorate also exists in Thailand which has a variety of non-formal education programmes for children, youth and adults according to the individual and national needs.
48. These illustrations point to a growing realization of the fact that, without adopting a flexible and unconventional approach to establish an alternative learning system in order to supplement and complement the formal system, many developing countries, especially those suffering from severe financial constraints, are not likely to succeed in stemming the problem of illiteracy at its very source in the foreseeable future.

49. Due to the lack of sufficient funds for constructing the required number of schools in many countries in Africa, as well as some in Asia and the Arab region, alternative and flexible measures have become unavoidable. In some of these countries, the non-formal arrangements of adult literacy are not restricted to the usual cut-off point of 15+, but the age limit is lowered down to 10+. Thus, those children of 10 years and above who do not have access to the usual primary schools for one reason or another are offered a chance of acquiring literacy and basic education. In Ethiopia, for example, this limit has been lowered further to the age of 8 years. While maintaining its focus on adults, the Ethiopian National Literacy Campaign effectively caters to the needs of primary-level learning for the age cohort 8 to 14 where there are no formal schools or where the schools cannot accommodate some children.
50. In addition to the organized systems of a formal and non-formal nature for the education of children and adults, there is a broader and, in some ways, informal learning system prevailing in society. A traditional informal system always existed and is important in its own right. But the recent advancements in communication systems have created new situations and possibilities from the educational standpoint. In advanced countries a variety of media and channels of information and education are now available in the home as well as in society. As time passes, more and more developing countries are also creating some of these facilities which are becoming increasingly more significant for general education, for practising newly acquired literacy skills and for using literacy skills for further learning and development. Besides the traditional channels of informal learning, there are a variety of other means and media such as radio, TV, documentary films, newspapers, magazines, libraries, video-libraries and so forth. These instruments and processes, constituting a kind of informal learning, can be utilized to supplement and complement the formal and non-formal systems of education for all. Furthermore, these means of communication and their related technologies are likely to grow and spread widely into practically all developing countries. There is, therefore, a need to consider how to use them most profitably as part of the larger movement of basic education for all in the perspective of lifelong education and better development.
51. In the light of the above, the working group may wish to discuss, among others, the following issues:
1. How to improve the quality and coverage of formal primary education? What operational measures could be taken to maximize enrolment ratios, reduce, and eventually eliminate, dropout rates and optimize success rates at the primary stage?
  2. What are the relative roles and responsibilities of the formal and non-formal systems of primary education in the perspective of education for all?
  3. Various alternative and innovative infrastructures have recently emerged in different countries in order to provide literacy and basic education to children as well as adults through non-formal learning arrangements. What are the merits and limitations of different structural and organizational arrangements of the non-formal system, especially in relation to the formal system? What lessons should be drawn from the experience acquired in this regard which could be utilized for renewing and strengthening these infrastructures for the 1990s?
  4. How to establish equivalence between formal and non-formal systems of learning as regards basic education to be provided to all, namely, children in school, out-of-school children and adults?

2. Literacy and post-literacy programmes: relevance, quality and functionality of content; instructional methods, materials and technologies
52. One of the most critical operational aspects in any literacy programme is to determine the objectives and content of learning, and to ensure their relevance and functionality as well as their quality. The chief reason why this particular aspect is so central and critical is that it is expected to take into account the learners themselves and their characteristics, their needs and problems, their occupations and pre-occupations, their age and prior experience, and the environmental setting in which they live. Such a learner-centered approach was recently highlighted by the World Conference on Education for All. From the questionnaire replies, it is amply evident that practically all countries take cognizance of the specific needs and experiences of particular groups of illiterate adults, such as populations in remote rural areas, those who live in urban areas and especially in urban slums, minority groups, refugees, migrants, nomads, semi-nomads, and the handicapped. Among them, programmes for women are given further special consideration.
53. Technological advancements during the last hundred years or more have gradually penetrated into the personal, social and vocational lives of peoples in different parts of the world, and have produced the need to acquire basic skills like reading and writing as well as the quantitative skills of counting and measurement. It should, however, be emphasized that for any effective programme of literacy, these skills constitute only instrumental and technical objectives. As observed earlier, there are certain other fundamental objectives which are to be achieved either through the process of acquiring literacy or through the use and application of these skills. These objectives may be cognitive or affective in nature and may be related to social, economic, political, cultural or the inner personal life of the learner. They may be connected with one's life in the family, at the work place, in the local community, or in the larger society. But it is this set of objectives that makes literacy dynamic, more need-based, motivating and, above all, genuinely functional. For example, a dynamic programme of basic education including literacy can aim at better health and sanitation, better child-care and concern about the education and development of children, better family welfare, economic progress through increased productivity on the farm or in the factory, greater civic participation, the acquisition of more self-confidence and autonomy, and a greater mastery over one's own socio-economic, political and physical environment. Such objectives, leading eventually to empowerment, transformation and a better quality of life, constitute the functionality of the programme content. If these valuable objectives are to be realized through an on-going literacy programme, it is imperative, first, to acquire a sufficiently high standard in the basic skills of reading and writing, etc., and, simultaneously, to learn to apply these skills effectively to various situations in the personal, social, political and occupational domains of one's life. It is this multi-dimensional process of acquiring basic skills, knowledge and attitudes on the one hand, and their application on the other, to transform one's own life and the environment in which one lives that make a literacy programme meaningful, dynamic and challenging.
54. Within these broad categories of objectives, specific curricular objectives and content of learning should be identified on the basis of the needs assessment of individuals and special groups. Learning needs are derived from the basic survival needs, such as food or health, on the one hand, and development needs, such as the use of new fertilizers, operating a bank account, handling a machine to generate more income, or forming an action group for a given cause, on the other. When development needs as well as basic needs in relation to a particular group of learners and their socio-economic environment are identified, specific learning needs

emerge as expressed in terms of knowledge, understanding, awareness, cognitive and practical skills, attitudes and values. Learning needs refer to those competencies and content that serve as specific educational inputs to the larger process of fulfilling the basic survival needs, as well as the development needs, of individuals and their groups within a particular socio-economic, political and cultural context.

55. As learning needs are specific to the learner and his environmental reality, it is evident that there would be some variation in the specific objectives and content elements for different types of learners and their respective groups. If this is not given due attention, and if a uniform and rigid programme content is imposed on large masses of illiterate people, even though the quality of learning may be high, its relevance could be low and its functionality reduced. Therefore, the relevance of programme content on the basis of several specific criteria must be ascertained. Curriculum developers may use a checklist, such as the following, for assessing and augmenting the relevance of objectives and content in their respective literacy programmes :
  - (a) Locational relevance: urban, rural, mountainous, desert area - characteristics of the locale; local environmental conditions;
  - (b) Occupational relevance: agricultural, industrial, supplementary income generation, etc.;
  - (c) Gender relevance: for men or for women, or for both;
  - (d) Familial relevance: related to child care, family learning, children's education, population planning, family income;
  - (e) Cultural relevance: national and social events, local celebrations, religious practices, community characteristics, political set up;
  - (f) Temporal relevance: learning for immediate application or for long-term or future use, contemporary development and current news;
  - (g) Universal relevance: common needs for all human beings such as health.
  - (j) Technological relevance : new technological devices and their increasing use and application in daily life.
56. In recent years, technological advancements have made an impression on many aspects of both urban and rural life, and this trend is growing rapidly. For instance, new agricultural technology is spreading to all parts of the world by way of new implements for cultivation, new techniques in poultry and dairy farming. Similarly, new tools of communication such as radio, TV and video are becoming increasingly more common throughout the world. Telephone networks are being extended to remote rural areas. Digital watches and pocket calculators are spreading fast. Computerization of certain public activities, such as banking and transport services, is growing rapidly even in developing countries. A larger number of electrical and electronic appliances, with more recent refinements and sophistication, are entering homes as economies progress in different parts of the world. In consequence, a new need has arisen to add technological relevance to this checklist so that the programme content of literacy, post-literacy and basic education in general is modernized, and understanding as well as awareness about the implications of a newly emerging technological environment are adequately emphasized.

57. A number of specific areas of programme content have been found to be in use in practically all countries, as shown by the questionnaire replies. These areas, through which language and mathematics are taught as part of literacy, and simultaneously functionality is enhanced for specific learning groups, are: health and hygiene, child care, population, environment, basic legal knowledge and civics, and the world of work. The last component is often separated into agricultural and industrial aspects. Furthermore, a large variety of productive and income-generating skills such as weaving, carpentry, handicrafts, vegetable gardening, mushroom growing, poultry raising, co-operative marketing, canning, etc., have been introduced in the curriculum in most countries for different groups. Also, the broader projects of industrial or agricultural development undertaken by governments or autonomous bodies have introduced literacy as an integral part of the programme in order to improve productivity and the quality of output, as well as the general welfare of the workers.
58. As regards the language of literacy, it is needless to state that the mother tongue is automatically favoured. In some countries, such as the United Republic of Tanzania, the national language is the language of literacy, which may not necessarily be the mother tongue for all. In certain Latin American countries, such as Peru, efforts have been made to provide bilingual literacy to take account of the difference between an official or national language and a local, community language. In several Francophone African countries, written scripts of the spoken languages of different communities or tribes have been produced to provide literacy in those languages, instead of French. There is a similar trend in certain Anglophone countries. However, some learners express the need to learn English or French instead of local languages for reasons of economic advantage and social prestige. There are many countries in Africa and Asia where a large number of languages and dialects exist. In such multilingual countries the process of determining the language of literacy becomes very complex. Hence, the question of language of literacy, which is closely connected with programme content, has to be resolved at the political and social levels to facilitate the procedures of curriculum development and instruction.
59. The time allotted to literacy learning is again an important factor in the selection and organization of programme content as well as in the creation of appropriate structures and arrangements for learning. The general trend is to divide the total duration of a literacy programme into two or more levels. The first level is normally of 300 to 400 hours spread over a period of six months to one year, with learning sessions conducted two to three times a week in the evenings. Week-ends are also often used for this purpose. At this level, the chief focus is typically on the acquisition of literacy skills, although the content elements, such as child-care for women, agriculture or other relevant themes for men, health and nutrition for both men and women, are used as contextual materials. The second and subsequent levels are offered as post-literacy or basic education programmes which are important and essential parts of the overall "literacy continuum". The need for post-literacy and further education programmes has been recognized by all countries in one form or another in order to achieve the aims of: (a) retention of literacy skills by making them permanent so that the phenomenon of relapse or reversal is avoided; (b) continuation of learning using literacy skills themselves as learning skills to attain further objectives; and (c) application of this learning to the personal, social and occupational domains of life, and thus enhancing functionality in real-life situations. The duration of the second and subsequent levels varies from six months to two or more years, depending on the standards expected to be reached, and may lead to the completion of basic education.

60. The standards of achievement are often laid down in terms of specific objectives and content for learning. In some countries, like India, these standards are not directly anchored to the formal system of primary education. In China, for practical reasons, differential standards are set for urban and rural programmes. In other countries, for example, several in the Arab region and also elsewhere, the standards of anticipated achievement are identical (or almost identical) with those of the formal primary school. They are therefore defined in terms of prescribed curricula. Both of these practices have their advantages and limitations. The choice of one pattern or the other reflects the overall purpose, philosophy and potential utility of basic education. In the light of this, each nation is required to review the present curriculum policy for basic education and its relationship with formal primary school, and take appropriate decisions regarding the nature and level of expected standards of achievement for the 1990s.
61. Apart from the learner's basic competence and motivation, some other key variables that control and condition the quality of learning outcomes are: programme content, instruction, evaluation and teacher training. Among these, programme content, formative and summative evaluation, and teacher competence are, in effect, major pre-requisites affecting the final act in education, namely, learning. It is at this stage that the learner interacts with the learning environment generated with the help of instructional methods, materials and media, as a result of which learning takes place. That is why the creation of an effective, motivating and lively learning environment by employing both classical and new educational technologies is a significant operational step.
62. Given the fact that the pace and style of learning among adult learners is substantially different from those of primary schoolchildren, it is imperative to adopt methods of teaching and learning that respect these differences. Several factors such as age and maturation, general life experience, work experience in different settings, economic constraints and other pre-occupations, the fatigue factor (when classes are held after the day's work), family responsibilities and other such factors should be taken into consideration when selecting instructional and motivational methods, preparing teaching/learning materials and employing educational media to promote learning. Some of the characteristics of adult learners, such as maturation and extensive life experience, should indeed prove advantageous in increasing the pace, quality and functionality of learning.
63. The questionnaire replies point to the fact that the use of new educational technologies, such as television, radio, and audio as well as video cassettes, all comprising non-print and electronic media, is increasing. But progress is still slow and halting, presumably because of the high costs of hardware and non-availability of software in different languages. Television programmes are often used for motivational purposes in a large number of countries (from all regions) where the required technological facilities are available. Radio is also utilized for motivational and general awareness-raising purposes, besides instructional objectives. There is, however, a compelling need to augment the use of new media to aid the teacher or animator in raising the quality and efficiency of learning and achieving greater coverage.
64. Most frequently encountered throughout the world are a different variety of print media, including textbooks, workbooks, teachers' handbooks, supplementary reading materials, charts and posters - often the outcome of Unesco's "rural press" movement. The textbook is obviously the universal learning material. One important innovation discernable in many countries in this field is the combination of traditional textbooks and workbooks. The new format provides the text and

corresponding worksheets in an integrated fashion. This development tends to increase costs, but is also likely to be more effective, especially for promoting reinforcement and self-learning activities.

65. Textbooks have no doubt proved to be a central tool for adopting graded and organized procedures for self-learning, and for the review and reinforcement of previous learning, closely aligned to the specific objectives and content of a curriculum plan. However, different policies and practices regarding textbooks are discernible. For example, some countries, such as India, produce several different textbooks in one and the same language probably because of the involvement of many independent voluntary agencies, besides the governmental agency, in literacy movements. On the other hand, the Department of Non-formal Education in Indonesia has produced one single common series of textbooks called Kejar Package A, and millions of copies of this package have been extensively distributed and used throughout the length and breadth of the country to spread literacy and basic education. This package is made up of 100 booklets in all. The first twenty (A-1 to A-20) consist of integrated and graded lessons in basic reading, writing and arithmetic using the Indonesian national language. The next forty (A-21 to A-60) are composed of advanced reading materials and contain additional basic knowledge and skills concerning various aspects of life. The remaining forty booklets (A-61 to A-100) discuss more specific and wide ranging aspects and areas of life, and are more advanced than the previous ones. The content of Package A has a reasonably close correspondence with the formal primary school curriculum which has been adapted by effecting certain additions and eliminations in the preparation of this package. Yet another trend is discernible, such as that in Kuwait, where the textbooks at the very initial stage of literacy learning for adults are different from primary school textbooks. But for the subsequent stages, that is to say post-literacy and continuing education, the textbooks prescribed for the formal primary and secondary stages are also used for youth and adults in order to enable them to take common examinations and earn credits and certificates without having to face problems of equivalence or experiencing a feeling of "second class" education through the non-formal system. Since textbooks are pivotal to the teaching/learning process and the quality of educational outcomes, it is important that the pros and cons of different practices are critically examined and a suitable policy adopted by each nation as part of the overall strategy to promote universal literacy and basic education.
66. Traditional instructional methods are often counter-productive in engaging adults in a meaningful and stimulating process of learning. Undoubtedly, there are certain learning elements where direct, guided group teaching is inevitable. But adults prefer more of a dialogue and participatory approaches to learning. They can easily learn from each other in small groups and carry out the process of inter-learning. Due to their life experience and maturity, they should be increasingly encouraged to carry out learning through sharing experiences, while the teacher should ideally play the role of an animator and facilitator of learning.
67. Furthermore, it should be emphasized at this stage that adults are equally capable of conducting self-learning with the minimum of initiation or guidance either from the literacy teacher or a fellow learner. It is therefore desirable that the skills of self-learning and self-evaluation are systematically cultivated and sharpened among adult learners. They are not only needed for the post-literacy stage but should prove very valuable throughout life for the continuation of learning on one's own in all formal, non-formal and informal settings, in the perspective of lifelong education. As adults learn to read, they should read to learn further. This will

create an awareness about the use of basic literacy skills, not only as life skills but also as skills for self-directed learning.

68. It is common practice that adult literacy centres operate in the evenings. This implies that the learners are already tired after a hard day's work when they go to the centre. In such physical and psychological circumstances, it is most essential that learning activities are accompanied by recreational activities such as individual and group singing, story-telling, video-viewing where possible, and different kinds of games including educational games. To the extent that the entire learning experience becomes as joyful as it is meaningful, the learner is likely to continue attending the literacy centre and maintain a good attendance record. Suitable techniques must be adopted according to the nature and composition of the group and the talent available both within the group and in the local community to make the classroom climate enjoyable as well as educationally profitable.
69. At the stage of post-literacy and continuing education leading to basic education, the methods of inter-learning and dialogue as well as guided group learning are indeed useful, but certain other learning strategies also become relevant and applicable. This is because: (a) the basic skills of reading and writing, which are essentially life skills, also become learning skills, and should be profitably used not only for promoting further learning but also for reinforcing and stabilizing them so as to avoid relapse; (b) the stage of literacy learning indirectly enhances educability and generates a concomitant competence of "learning how to learn"; and (c) as a result of (a) and (b), greater possibilities of adopting the processes of self-learning and self-directed learning are created, in the perspective of lifelong education, by employing the strategies of "own-time" and independent learning. Following these principles, essentially derived from the foundations of lifelong education, the Unesco Institute for Education (UIE) in Hamburg has identified about a dozen major learning strategies for post-literacy and the continuing education of neo-literate learners. One such learning strategy based on these principles and which has been found to be very promising is concerned with "newspapers for neo-literates". Among the first such newspapers that came into existence, the publication of Kibaru in Mali attracted international attention largely as a result of the recognition accorded to it by Unesco in 1980. Other countries, such as Ethiopia, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania, have been publishing such newspapers for wide distribution among neo-literates. As the material presented is of contemporary interest, neo-literates are highly motivated to read them and eagerly wait for new issues to come out. This strategy has proved useful and may be adopted by those countries where it has not yet been introduced. There are several other strategies, such as graded textbooks, supplementary reading materials, libraries for neo-literates, reading groups, action groups, the use of television and other new media, etc., whose pedagogical strengths and limits, as well as feasibility and cost implications, are also worth examining. Besides learning strategies for neo-literates, creation of appropriate structures for post-literacy learning, like Jana Shikshan Nilayam (People's Continuing Education Centres) in India, Folk Colleges in the United Republic of Tanzania and Village Reading Centres in Thailand, is also essential in order to develop multiple opportunities for post-literacy learning.
70. Valuable work done by the Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco (ACCU), located in Japan, on the preparation of learning materials for neo-literates is worth noting. The ACCU has prepared, on a sample basis for Asian countries, simple but attractive and instructive materials for neo-literates for different target groups on different themes considered to show promising functional value. Both print media, and non-print and electronic media have been employed for this purpose. The methodology evolved by ACCU specialists in the process of preparing these materials

has been shared with Member States in the Asian and Pacific Region through seminars and workshops. All these activities have been carried out in close co-operation with Unesco's Regional Office for Education and concerned Member States in the region. Several of these materials have also been translated into different national languages. Other regional offices, besides the one for Asia and the Pacific, have also carried out extensive work on instructional strategies for post-literacy and continuing education, and yet much more remains to be done. For example, Member States in Africa have expressed the need for more didactic materials and more training of personnel who could prepare them. As part of the overall literacy continuum, this component should be strengthened further during the 1990s in order to make the struggle against illiteracy more effective.

71. The working group may wish to discuss, among others, the following questions:
  1. How to assess and identify basic learning needs? How to inter-relate learning needs of the individual with the priorities and demands of the community and the country? What is the relationship between the practice of establishing relevance and functionality of objectives and content of basic education on the one hand and the basic learning needs approach on the other?
  2. It is often said that literacy is always functional. If so, what is the significance of using the term "functional literacy" in the context of (a) industrialized countries, (b) developing countries?
  3. In a multi-lingual setting, what could be some of the major considerations that need to be taken into account in making a decision regarding the language of literacy?
  4. What are some of the important factors that should be kept in view in regard to methods, materials and media to strengthen the quality of literacy learning?
  5. What are the major aims of post-literacy learning? How can the post-literacy programme be designed in order to achieve these aims?
  6. In what ways can the new educational technologies be utilized to promote self-learning, inter-learning and dialogue, and to help the teacher indirectly in improving the quality of teaching and learning?
3. Evaluation of the learner's achievement and of the larger impact of literacy and basic education
72. Policy-makers, planners and practitioners have recognized the need and significance of a systematic and comprehensive scheme of evaluation for different purposes and for different types of decision-making. Questionnaire replies have shown that in practically all countries procedures for testing learner achievement exist for certification and other such purposes. While achievement testing is indeed important and essential, the demand from the field is to have a "built-in" system of evaluation integrated into the entire literacy drive. Some of the implications of a built-in system are that evaluation should be illuminative and improvement-oriented; and that it becomes a continuous process and a tool to watch the "health" of all crucial aspects of a literacy programme or campaign, indicating any necessary modifications. It should not become a threat to literacy workers or burdensome to learners. For this, a diagnostic and development-oriented, rather than a rigid and measurement-oriented, approach needs to be adopted. A built-in system is not restricted exclusively to learner evaluation, but also includes curriculum evaluation aimed at improving the quality of learning materials and methods, progress monitoring to ensure effective implementation of all important aspects of the literacy programme,

- and impact evaluation to assess the effects of literacy and post-literacy learning on the life of the learner, on his or her family and on the community.
73. The evaluation of learner achievement poses certain problems. Since learners are adults, they often resent testing. They also fear examinations as they feel that their prestige is at stake. They do not like being tested in the same way as young children at school. In consequence, a traditional type of examination system contributes towards increasing the incidence of drop-outs. On the other hand, adult learners are capable of conducting self-evaluation as well as participatory evaluation. They can diagnose their own deficiencies in mastering reading or writing skills and seek remedial measures from peer learners or literacy teachers. They have to be sensitized and made conscious about a process of self-directed diagnosis and remedial action. Such an informal and formative method of assessment, practised by many skilful teachers or animators, becomes more effective with adults. Many Latin American countries have been following participatory evaluation procedures as an integral part of "popular education" within a given community or group. This is generally acceptable to adult learners, but such an evaluation system is often more conducive to the assessment of socio-political and cultural goals constituting functionality, and may or may not provide adequate evidence of mastery over literacy skills by individual participants. It is therefore important to make arrangement for assessing both basic literacy skills and functionality without neglecting one or the other.
  74. While formative and informal testing integrated with day-to-day learning is a great asset to improve the quality of achievement, a time comes when, for several reasons, a summative evaluation with a certain degree of externality and rigour becomes necessary. Here too, innovative methods have been employed by different countries adapted to the characteristics of the adult clientele. Some countries have decentralized and even individualized testing programmes. For example, while the overall literacy norms are set nationally in China, achievement evaluation as such is carried out locally. Similarly, in India, there is no national level or even provincial level testing; it is decentralized at the local level, but the national authorities lay down general recommendations indicating expected levels of achievement at different sub-stages of literacy learning. In the United Republic of Tanzania, a sort of national testing programme has been instituted to maintain standards, but individual learners are at liberty to choose their own time to appear for the test when they feel confident that they are ready for it. In Ethiopia, those who are found to be below the expected level of achievement are given additional time and special help to catch up by means of a systematically devised remedial programme. Colombia and Mexico also follow systematic evaluation procedures in a decentralized form.
  75. The testing techniques generally employed are oral, written and observational. At the post-literacy stage, written tests are more feasible. A dialogue method which is followed for teaching is also used for evaluation. Sometimes a natural and realistic situation is adopted to assess written skills. For instance, in Nepal literacy forms part of earning and learning groups in rural areas where the members of the group have to maintain minutes of their meetings and accounts of their sales and purchases. In many countries, the neo-literate adults are encouraged to fill in application forms to some governmental authorities in order to present the particular demands of the local community, or they send letters to their relatives or friends. In India, whenever a university student successfully imparts literacy to any illiterate adult under an "each one teach one" plan, the neo-literate is encouraged to write a brief letter to the university authority as evidence of his or her newly acquired skill.

76. It is well known that the quality of the learning outcome is largely conditioned by the quality of curricular inputs and processes, such as methods of teaching and learning, textbooks, workbooks, teachers' handbooks and other instructional materials. Textbooks and other materials and media, as well as the techniques of teaching and learning, are the antecedents on which the consequence or outcome, namely achievement, depends. Hence, the quality of these elements should be evaluated and maximized through procedures of curriculum evaluation. Assessment of learning needs, development of needs-based programme content, and ensuring its relevance and functionality are in fact some of the facets of curriculum evaluation. But, having established a good set of curricular objectives and content, one of the most critical inputs, whose quality and effectiveness must be assessed and optimized, is the textbook. Several countries, such as Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, Kenya, Kuwait, Mexico, Sri Lanka and Venezuela, have been evaluating textbooks, workbooks and other materials through trial testing and expert judgement. However, textbook evaluation continues to be *ad hoc* and incidental in many parts of the world. This practice needs to be improved by adopting a more systematic and scientific approach. It is necessary to evaluate both the physical and pedagogical dimensions of a textbook or a workbook by using formative and summative evaluation procedures, as well as expert judgement, to ensure its optimum possible quality and pedagogical value. Likewise, other components of the curriculum should also be evaluated and renewed from time to time, for which appropriate training should be imparted to curriculum developers, as well as to the authors of textbooks, teachers guides and other such didactic materials.
77. Yet another important dimension of a built-in and improvement-oriented evaluation system is progress monitoring. This dimension assumes a special significance for every country in the 1990s. This is because literacy work in the 1990s should be strictly target-oriented and time-bound if an adequate measure of success is to be achieved by the turn of the century. To fulfil such a tacit commitment, it is obligatory that progress made in reducing adult illiteracy and in promoting primary education is checked from time to time - at reasonably frequent intervals - and timely measures are taken to improve the situation if any deficiencies are detected. Such monitoring is needed at all levels of the literacy operation - local, district, provincial and national. In the absence of a well-designed monitoring system one would not know whether the programme is or is not functioning effectively at all levels, and whether it is really progressing at a sufficient pace and producing the desired quality according to the set targets. It is common experience that no matter how carefully and meticulously national plans are prepared to eliminate illiteracy, when it comes to concrete implementation at different levels, many unforeseen problems, obstacles and bottlenecks arise. If they are not detected and removed in time, the chances are that they would vitiate the end results - to the disappointment of planners, practitioners and political leaders.
78. Monitoring refers to a process of periodically observing the progress of a programme in order to identify its strengths as well as its shortfalls, if any, for the purpose of taking timely corrective measures with a view to optimizing its efficiency and effectiveness. This process requires checking the progress at different levels, such as at that of individual adult education centres, at sub-district or district level, and up to the national level. Similarly, all important functions - administrative, financial and pedagogical - operating horizontally as well as vertically, cutting across the different levels mentioned above, have to be monitored. This, in effect, results in a grid of functions by levels for developing a plan of progress monitoring.

79. In fact, many countries carry out some sort of supervision or periodical data-gathering. These processes do have certain features of monitoring, but the acid test of a systematic and genuine monitoring is the condition that, where necessary, timely corrective measures are taken. This condition is often not fulfilled. Consequently, even when traditional supervision is carried out or statistics gathered, target-oriented efficiency of the programme is not maintained. That is why well-designed progress monitoring should become a built-in system in implementing literacy programmes. In industrial or medical fields, the technique of monitoring is widely used for ensuring quality control and efficiency. However, systematic monitoring in education is a relatively new entrant, and its proper application to the literacy drive can prove very valuable as part of the overall built-in system of evaluation.
80. It may be noted at this stage that not everything that is done at each level should be monitored, although it is theoretically possible to do so. It is preferable to exercise a degree of discrimination for the sake of making progress monitoring manageable and functional. For this, a set of major and critical variables and indicators should be carefully selected, as is being done in China, Ethiopia, India, earlier in Cuba, and to a certain extent in the Philippines at the primary school stage. Some of the typical variables are, of course, enrolment, attendance and completion rates. But, within these, the progress rates for women or any other special groups should be specifically monitored. Certain other significant variables that affect the programme may include: timely appointment, training and retraining of literacy teachers; adequate supplies of textbooks and other learning materials to various districts, sub-districts and learning centres; regularity in payment of salaries or honoraria to all teachers and other educational personnel; regularity in maintaining contacts with national leaders and local communities; adequacy and regularity in financial flow; punctuality in the publication and distribution of newsletters for neo-literates; etc.
81. As stated earlier, impact evaluation is still another component of a comprehensive and development-oriented evaluation scheme. Insofar as literacy and post-literacy programmes are concerned, impact evaluation has a special place in this scheme because serious questions are at times raised by some political leaders and others in society about the actual gain derived from adult literacy activities and the wisdom of making financial investments in them. It is only natural that public authorities ask these questions. Such questions sometimes create an embarrassing situation if undue claims are made about the impact of literacy. In this situation, a systematically conducted impact evaluation will bring realism when making claims. Secondly, the budgetary demands for literacy have to compete with other sectors of the educational and social services. Here, concrete information based on impact evaluation can be of great help in securing the due share - which is normally less than what one would expect. Moreover, adequate knowledge and a clear understanding of the likely impact of literacy on the lives of neo-literates can be of immense value to curriculum developers, textbook writers, literacy teachers and teacher educators in devising teaching/learning materials and procedures so that potential impact is optimized, thus getting more socio-economic returns on the investment made.
82. Impact evaluation refers to a process of assessing the immediate as well as the long-range effects of learning on the life of the learner, on his or her family, on the local community and the larger society. Impact studies have been carried out over recent decades in several countries, such as Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania and Venezuela, among others. They have brought to light valuable evidence about the

impact of literacy either in a generalizable form or specific to the lives of individuals. Here are some examples of such efforts:

- Literacy has resulted in developing a new self-confidence, freeing the neo-literate from the feeling of dependence, inferiority and "second class" citizenship.
- Literacy has brought a new social status and respectability in the community.
- Those blind adults who acquire literacy in braille have felt that they can now "see".
- Those who have acquired literacy and a basic level of education have greater chances of: (a) improving their living conditions; (b) reducing infant mortality; (c) participating in the immunization programmes of health departments; (d) having smaller family norms.

Both men and women have succeeded in increasing income as a result of dynamic literacy programmes coupled with development activities.

- Some individuals, after acquiring literacy, have made their way through secondary and higher education and have earned graduate, and even post-graduate, degrees.
- As regards the impact of women's literacy and basic education: (a) the higher the mother's educational level, the lower the mortality rate of her children and the better the sanitation, nutrition and health practices of the family; (b) better family planning practices are adopted, together with better spacing of births and fewer children per family; (c) greater care is taken of children's education, reducing dropout rates and leading to better school performance.
- Greater numbers of literate adults exercise their voting rights. They have shown greater participation in civic and political affairs.
- After receiving literacy, adults have tended to take greater advantage of facilities in society, such as postal, banking and medical services.

83. Many more such examples can be cited. What is needed for the 1990s is to develop a plan for conducting impact evaluation from time to time by individual nations. This can be done by following various methods, such as anecdotal reports, the dialogue method, questionnaires to literacy teachers and others concerned, interviews, tracer studies (following up a sample of literates for a few years), and socio-anthropological techniques of intensive observation and experience gathering.
84. It may be noted at this stage that certain aspects of evaluation are close to research. This should be treated as a welcome sign - because research is needed in many different aspects of literacy, post-literacy and basic education. This includes many conceptual and operational areas, such as perceptual issues, motivation, needs assessment surveys, use of print, non-print and electronic media, retention studies and the like. It may be desirable to plan evaluation and research programmes in conjunction with each other.
85. There are very few replies to the questionnaire saying that there are no research activities on literacy in a given country. Research work is usually conducted by university departments and sometimes by specialized centres attached to the ministries of education (Jamaica, Oman, Sri Lanka) or by the NGOs (Canada, Ecuador). The priority research areas most frequently mentioned by both developing and industrialized countries are the nature, extent and consequences of illiteracy, as well as the content of literacy programmes, and instructional methods and motivation for literacy. The problems of functional literacy have received growing attention not only in the industrialized countries but also in a number of developing countries (Bangladesh, Ghana, Guatemala, Republic of Korea and Zaire, among others). Evaluation of national experiences and various aspects of the impact of

literacy programmes are subjects of research in some countries like Gabon, Grenada and the United Republic of Tanzania. However, some other important areas, such as relationship between illiteracy and failure at school and between literacy and employment as well as the relapse into illiteracy, do not seem to be receiving due attention in many countries. And the practical application of the outcomes of research activities still remains a serious problem.

86. In the light of these considerations, the working group may wish to discuss, among others, the following issues:
  1. What is the significance of a "built-in" system of evaluation in the programmes of literacy and basic education? What should be the major components of such a system of evaluation?
  2. What is the role of self-evaluation in literacy education for adults? How can it be used most effectively? What could be the limits of its application?
  3. How can progress monitoring be organized in order to make the implementation of a national literacy programme optimally efficient and effective? What kind of infrastructure is necessary to make monitoring a success? What could be some of the critical variables of a literacy programme which are considered essential for monitoring? How can monitoring be inter-linked with supervision on the one hand and statistical data gathering on the other?
  4. Who should carry out impact evaluation of a lifelong or basic education programme, and how? How could the results of impact evaluation be utilized to optimize the immediate as well as the long-range effects of basic education, including literacy - and by whom?
  5. It is often argued that certificates should be given to adults on successful completion of programmes. If so, in what way could such a certification system serve the adult learner and different sectors of society?
4. Initial and continuing training of literacy teachers and of other personnel in literacy work
87. It is evident from the questionnaire replies that practically all developing countries have training programmes for literacy teachers. They also have some sort of further orientation or retraining programmes. However, differences exist as regards their duration, content, etc., depending on who the literacy teachers are. In Jordan, Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, for example, school-teachers are selected as teachers of adult literacy. These teachers require only a brief initial orientation before they start teaching adults, followed by brief spells of reorientation. By contrast, in some other countries, such as India, most literacy teachers are not professional teachers: they are volunteers having little pedagogical background. Their training needs are therefore substantially different. Furthermore, there are many other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America where both school-teachers and volunteers are involved in literacy teaching. Most volunteers do not have pedagogical training and are drawn from such diverse population groups as social workers, retired army men, other retired personnel, university students, boy scouts and girl guides, trade union officials, employees in industries and offices, housewives and the educated unemployed.
88. There are other important variations in the teaching force, as is shown by questionnaire analysis and other data sources. In most countries, literacy instructors

are part-time. But there are exceptions, such as in Kenya where some 3,000 teachers are employed by the Government on a full-time basis. Furthermore, when national campaigns are launched, such as those in Cuba, Ethiopia and Nicaragua (or in earlier times in the USSR), much larger numbers of literacy teachers are needed because a very massive task has to be carried out in a much shorter time than usual. In such a situation, people having vastly varied educational backgrounds and a wide age-range are engaged in literacy teaching. The training to be provided to these campaign workers is therefore not identical to that given to teachers engaged in normal literacy programmes.

39. The teacher is one of the most critical variables in ensuring the quality of learning outcomes. This complexity is further compounded by the fact that the literacy teacher is not just a typical teacher in a formal school system, but is expected to perform a number of tasks as co-ordinator, animator and facilitator in different settings and situations involving the local community, development agencies and, usually, unmotivated adult learners beset with the problems of poverty, disease and even exploitation. Therefore, when literacy teachers are not adequately prepared to work with adult learners and to carry out the tasks of teaching and evaluation properly, a variety of problems often arises, and, in the ultimate analysis, the literacy movement suffers a serious set-back.
90. From all this, it is clear that a strong programme of initial and continuing training for literacy teachers is most crucial. This is true for other educational personnel as well for those who have to undertake managerial, financial, supervisory and other responsibilities in the overall movement. What is required is nothing less than a well-designed and systematic staff development programme. It is also necessary to take into account the turn-over rate, because when a literacy programme is highly dependent on voluntary workers who are paid either a small "token" honorarium or nothing at all, many of them leave the job just as soon as they can find better remuneration elsewhere.
91. Some of the major actions needed for developing effective training and retraining of literacy teachers pertain to: (a) job analysis; (b) preparation of a training curriculum in terms of objectives and content; (c) adoption of an appropriate training and evaluation methodology, as well as the identification of trainers; and (d) adoption of effective procedures of organized as well as individualized retraining and continuing education programmes. Some examples of (a) and (b) are given below.
92. As regards job analysis, studies have shown that the main tasks which a literacy teacher, as a grassroots-level functionary, is expected to perform are: (a) motivating learners; (b) mobilizing the community to support the adult education programme; (c) organizing the teaching/learning process; (d) sustaining learners' interest in the programme; (e) organizing a socio-cultural programme to strengthen popular culture and make learning a joyful experience; (f) organizing skill development and income-generating programmes, as necessary; (g) establishing links with a network of development departments at the grassroots level; (h) establishing links with popular organizations at the local level; (i) evaluating the learner as well as the programme; (j) monitoring the progress of the programme; (k) ensuring arrangements for post-literacy and further education.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> D.V. Sharma, Training of Literacy Personnel at the Grassroots and Middle Levels. UIE, Hamburg, 1988 (mimeo).

93. Based on this job analysis, and similar criteria, the training curriculum for the literacy teacher may include the following items of content, which are given as illustrations:
1. Objectives of the adult education programme, its clientele, and implementation procedures at the local level;
  2. Understanding adult learners and relating their learning needs to adult literacy programmes;
  3. Procedures of motivating adult learners;
  4. Linking literacy to an improvement in the quality of life for the individual, the family and the community;
  5. Organizing adult learners/community members around areas of common concern;
  6. Adult learning methods;
  7. Teaching/learning materials and their use in imparting literacy and numeracy;
  8. Organizing group discussions and meeting cultural needs;
  9. Organizing skill development programmes for income generation, etc.;
  10. Using the resources of other agencies/departments by establishing appropriate linkages;
  11. Using community resources to strengthen the adult education programme;
  12. Evaluating and reporting learners' progress;
  13. Helping neo-literates to take advantage of arrangements for post-literacy and continuing education.<sup>4</sup>
94. A similar analysis for middle- and national-level functionaries may be made by each country in developing programmes and structures for training and retraining them. The duration of initial training and the frequency of retraining should also be determined, and their effectiveness evaluated from time to time. When the period of initial training is too short or when the retraining programme is weak, the whole movement of literacy and further education suffers a set back. As part of the staff development programme, various methods, materials and media have to be used innovatively and effectively. Distance education programmes, such as those developed in Brazil and Kenya, may be considered if the required infrastructure exists. The Regional Offices of Unesco and other Unesco units have organized training for national-level leaders in literacy and post-literacy programmes. They have also produced training manuals and other literature to support national efforts in improving the quality of training programmes for the middle- and grassroots-level functionaries.
95. The working group, in the light of the above, may wish to discuss several issues, such as the following:
1. What are the additional responsibilities of a literacy teacher compared to those of a primary school-teacher? What kind of training and local assistance should be provided to the literacy teacher in order to perform these duties effectively?
  2. How to mobilize volunteers from different sectors of society and motivate them to participate in the teaching of literacy? Who should undertake this task? What kinds of non-monetary incentives and rewards could be given to volunteers engaged in different aspects of a literacy drive?
  3. What are some of the important objectives and content elements that should be included in the programmes of retraining and continuing education for literacy teachers? Who would normally act as trainers of literacy teachers?
  4. What kind of infrastructure would be needed for the initial and continuing training of teachers and other personnel involved in literacy work? To what

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<sup>4</sup> D.V. Sharma, *Ibid.*

extent can distance education techniques and new educational technologies, where available, be used for training purposes?

5. Functional literacy and continuing education: issues pertaining to industrialized as well as developing countries

96. The purposes and strategies of post-literacy learning have been briefly discussed earlier in the context of developing countries. Since recently discovered problems of functional illiteracy, as indicated in questionnaire replies by many industrialized countries, have some similarity with those of post-literacy, the exchange of experiences being accumulated by both categories of countries in these fields could be of mutual benefit.
97. In developing countries, post-literacy programmes are treated as part of a literacy continuum. The post-literacy learner has already acquired basic literacy skills, but they need to be stabilized and made permanent. Moreover, the neo-literate is expected to continue learning further, using literacy skills as learning skills, and apply the new knowledge, skills and attitudes to tackle daily problems of general and vocational life with greater confidence.
98. For those persons in industrialized countries whose literacy skills are fragile, insufficient to cope with the daily tasks of life, there are similar learning needs and purposes. Therefore, they are required not only to stabilize their literacy skills and competencies but to continue their education in order to raise their levels so as to apply them in performing both the general and vocational functions of daily life with greater efficiency and self-reliance.
99. Recent movements in Australia, Canada and the USA, as also in the Federal Republic of Germany, France and some other European countries, tend to show that there is no single definition of functional literacy, that its meaning varies across countries and even within countries depending on the specific context in which the term is used, and that the literacy needs change and grow as the society becomes more industrialized and as the daily tasks of a general and vocational character become more complex. As a consequence, estimates of the extent of functional illiteracy vary according to the definitions used and the kinds of functions accepted as evaluative criteria. For example, a recent Canadian study presenting a differential diagnosis of functional illiteracy, has shown how percentages of functional illiteracy vary with types of tasks, although the overall estimates indicate that about 20 per cent of the adult population has seriously inadequate literacy skills. In any case, the percentage of absolute illiteracy is quoted as much lower than that of functional illiteracy. Most industrialized countries have indicated in their questionnaire replies that the enrolment ratios and completion ratios of primary education are nearly perfect. On the other hand, the estimates of functional illiteracy in these countries range from 5 to 10 per cent and even higher.
100. It appears that very small percentages of absolute illiteracy as well as functional illiteracy have existed for a long time in practically every industrialized country, but they were largely invisible and were generally treated as negligible. However, during the 1970s, and especially during the 1980s, the problem of unemployment among youth and adults resulted in "rediscovering" the illiteracy problem - as it were. It was found that some of the unemployed youth and adults could not be easily trained or retrained for new jobs on account of inadequate basic skills.

101. As primary or basic level education is fully universalized in advanced countries, practically all children receive some schooling. But a small percentage of them do not succeed in mastering basic literacy skills and functional competencies while at school so that they are incapable of performing social, economic and political activities at the level of efficiency that an industrialized society requires of its citizens. The causes of school failure, which inevitably lead to problems of functional illiteracy, are many and varied. In some cases, the home background is not conducive to learning. Children from homes where there are problems of alcoholism, social deprivation, economic pressures, etc., have difficulty in completing the first level of schooling, maintaining regular attendance and doing the required study at home. An educationally unfavourable home environment is sometimes accompanied by a similar environment in the neighborhood, local community and among peer groups. Consequently, even though such children may remain in the school for years, they do not master the basic skills of reading, writing, etc., at an adequate level of performance. Sometimes schools have difficulty in arranging for proper remedial measures or giving separate treatment to children who cannot progress with the rest of the class. Also schools have had to operate with less staff and resources in industrialized countries over the past fifteen years due to reductions in educational expenditure. Hence, class sizes have grown and teacher morale has declined. Children's learning has been the first to suffer from such austerity measures. As a result, some of these children come out of school and enter life as youth and adults with inadequate basic education. As the kinds of jobs not requiring much competence in reading and writing are fast disappearing from industrialized societies, such people have difficulty in getting or maintaining jobs. Consequently, serious problems of employability and reduced productivity arise. There are, of course, other difficult cases in schools. When children are mentally retarded or physically handicapped and/or have problems like dyslexia, the acquisition of literacy skills could be difficult. They also have to be helped at an early age to a maximum possible extent.
102. It may be noted at this stage that the roots of functional illiteracy are not exclusively in school or in the education system in general; they are spread far and wide in society. Therefore, the strategies to be adopted to handle the problems of functional illiteracy should be multi-pronged, and the agencies to be involved are not only educational but also those in charge of employment, social welfare and the like. In fact, many industrialized countries have initiated action in this direction through governmental and/or non-governmental efforts. Basic as well as functional literacy programmes have been launched in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, UK, USA and other industrialized countries by many different kinds of initiatives and agencies, such as adult education institutions, community groups, charities, media, industries and firms - besides the ministries of education, labour and social welfare. At the regional and international levels, Unesco has already taken action to promote functional literacy by organizing workshops, research studies and an information exchange network, especially through the Unesco Institute for Education in Hamburg.
103. Although a number of activities have been initiated during the 1980s, much more remains to be done in the 1990s. While the action taken so far by different Member States are indeed worthwhile, they do not appear to be in any way sufficient compared to the magnitude and complexity of the problem. Furthermore, the nature of functional literacy (or post-literacy in developing countries) is such that once the present backlog is removed, the problems will not be resolved for ever because, as societies make industrial, technological and social progress, new learning needs arise for which it becomes essential to establish continuing education programmes and their corresponding infrastructures in the framework of lifelong education.

Thus, both immediate and long-range actions are necessary to resolve the problems of functional illiteracy and continuing education at the basic stage.

104. To meet these needs, appropriate policies and strategies will have to be framed for the 1990s and a variety of operational programmes will have to be launched and strengthened. Obviously, some research as well as data-gathering to understand the extent and complexity of the problem will be unavoidable. Also, mechanisms of regional and international co-ordination and co-operation, as well as information exchange, will have to be established and augmented. Concurrently, a variety of operational and educational programmes will have to be mounted or stepped up to extend concrete learning opportunities and facilities to potential learners who are already suffering from the educational and, concomitant, socio-economic handicaps that go under the new rubric of functional illiteracy. Some non-governmental as well as government-sponsored agencies have already started doing commendable work at the grass-roots level for these people who are normally difficult to identify for various practical reasons. These institutions have to be strengthened and multiplied during this decade by providing them with the necessary support of an organizational, financial and academic nature.
105. The working group may wish to discuss, among others, the following issues:
  1. It is observed that the problems and programmes of functional literacy and continuing education in industrialized countries have some commonality with those of post-literacy and continuing education in developing countries. How, then, can the experiences gained in these fields be shared among both groups of countries and utilized for mutual benefit in order to develop and strengthen these programmes?
  2. What could be the economic and other consequences of functional illiteracy in industrialized countries? What kind of organizational and financial arrangements are needed to set up programmes that are adequate enough to respond to the magnitude of the task?
  3. What are the operational implications of the problem of functional illiteracy in order to renew the objectives, content and teaching/learning procedures of primary and lower secondary schools in industrialized countries?
  4. What kind of co-ordination mechanism might be established among industrialized countries (as well as developing countries) in order to take concerted action to meet the recurrent problems of functional illiteracy as societies achieve increasingly more technological, economic and social advances with the passage of time? Could a long-range project for the European and other industrialized, as well as newly industrialized, countries be taken up to respond to the issue of functional literacy in a co-operative and concerted manner? If so, how?
6. Establishing new and more effective partnerships; management and mobilization of resources to ensure education for all
106. If the policies and plans for achieving the goal of a literate world are to be made successful, there will be an urgent need to mobilize adequate resources and take other related actions at different levels in co-operation with a number of individuals and agencies by establishing new and more effective partnerships. The task of promoting literacy and education for all is huge and multi-dimensional, and therefore it cannot be the exclusive responsibility of the education department alone; the responsibility has to be shared by other ministries of the government and

all sections of society as a whole. To achieve education for all, "all should be for education". Some are learners, others are either teachers, organizers, motivators or supporters of this basic input for better progress and development for all individuals and their communities. Thus, new partnerships and a sense of mutual responsibility and commitment need to be fostered, as mentioned in the World Declaration on Education for All adopted in March 1990 by the World Conference, which says: "National, regional, and local educational authorities have a unique obligation to provide basic education for all, but they cannot be expected to supply every human, financial or organizational requirement for this task. New and revitalized partnerships at all levels will be necessary: partnerships among all sub-sectors and forms of education, recognizing the special role of teachers and that of administrators and other educational personnel; partnerships between education and other government departments, including planning, finance, labour, communications, and other social sectors; partnerships between governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups, and families. In this context, the terms and conditions of service of teachers and their status, which constitute a determining factor in the implementation of education for all, must be urgently improved in all countries in line with the joint ILO/Unesco Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers (1966). The recognition of the vital role of both families and teachers is particularly important. Genuine partnerships contribute to the planning, implementing, managing and evaluation of basic education programmes."

107. It has been emphasized over and over again that a firm and sustained political will is the most important condition to achieve adequate success in the programmes of literacy and basic education for children, youth and adults. Indeed, a firm political will is the greatest resource. This is because, in the ultimate analysis, the primary responsibility of these programmes lies with the State. Once the political will is ensured, the next important step is to mobilize society in order to translate the political will into a strong national commitment and the social will. Experience of several developing countries has clearly shown that a great deal of progress can be accomplished in this field when a nation has succeeded in harnessing a strong political commitment and when this is backed by the mobilization of all pertinent sectors of the society - governmental, non-governmental, private and voluntary. This action can result in improving the effectiveness of the existing resources and can also pave the way for attracting external resources.
108. Active involvement of volunteers and non-governmental agencies has been found to be useful in many countries in reducing costs and harnessing human and intellectual resources in any literacy drive, whether launched as a "national campaign" or otherwise. Volunteers from among school-teachers, retired teachers, university and secondary school students, older scouts and guides, retired army personnel, members of trade union, women's organizations, non-governmental organizations working in several fields of social service and development, the staff of industrial firms and many other such groups can be invited to undertake specific responsibilities and provide human, material and financial support to wipe out illiteracy and promote basic education for all. It should, however, be noted that proper orientation should be provided to voluntary workers conducting this programme so that the quality of learning outcomes does not suffer. Universities and other educational agencies can provide help in this matter by producing materials, monitoring progress, organizing recurrent training and conducting studies.
109. Similar help from artists, writers and journalists can be sought for various purposes. The support from the media, including radio, TV and newspapers, for motivational purposes as well as mobilization of mass support is also equally important. In brief,

people working in very diverse fields in society have a place in the literacy movement and can play a vital role, individually and collectively, in different aspects of the programme leading to basic education for all.

110. As stated earlier, even after mobilizing internal resources to the fullest extent and improving planning, implementation and the management of formal and non-formal programmes of education for all, many developing countries will not be able to make sufficient progress within a reasonable period of time without external financial aid, besides intellectual and material support. The problems of the external debt burden, increasing amounts of debt servicing, difficulties concerned with fluctuating prices of raw materials, and natural disasters have already come in the way of achieving the desired progress during the 1980s, compared to the previous two decades. Therefore, special measures will have to be taken through bilateral donor agencies, multi-lateral aid agencies and other concerned bodies - regional as well as international - in order to create conditions during the 1990s to supplement internal resources with external support, and thus enable the countries afflicted by these problems to make speedy progress in education. Surely, the help of regional and international non-governmental organizations, trade unions, religious groups, and UN Agencies, including Unesco, UNICEF, ILO and WHO, would be needed for various purposes? The task of realizing the aspiration of education for all is no doubt massive and difficult, but it can be achieved if the necessary efforts are made in a co-operative and concerted manner over a period of time, if the required resources are mobilized and managed well, and if collective action is taken by concerned agencies and institutions at the local, national, regional and international levels. As the World Declaration of the Jomtien Conference asserted: "There has never been a more propitious time to commit ourselves to providing basic learning opportunities for all people of the world."

111. The working group may wish to discuss, among others, the following questions:

1. What are the different ways in which voluntary workers and non-governmental organizations can be mobilized for literacy work? What are the responsibilities that the national government should undertake in order to utilize the services of voluntary workers and NGOs in the most profitable manner in a literacy drive?
2. Apart from volunteers, what are the other governmental as well as private resources that the national and local authorities should mobilize for literacy and basic education programmes?
3. In some developing nations, the mobilization of internal resources for achieving the goals of universal literacy and basic education within reasonable time targets would not be sufficient on account of the debt burden, debt servicing, and other such difficulties. What steps should therefore be taken by these countries to mobilize external resources? What concrete action should simultaneously be taken by relevant regional and international agencies to help the least developed countries and other developing nations in mobilizing financial, intellectual and other resources in order to achieve the goals of a literate world?
4. There is a coincidence of a renewed commitment in the struggle against illiteracy on account of ILY, etc. on the one hand and the recent favourable changes in the international political climate on the other. In this context, how far can the new political developments be of help in increasing financial support to global social services and human development needs, like literacy and basic education for all? What kind of action should be taken in this

connection in the early years of the 1990s? Who should take this action and how?